

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 BIB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-07 DHA-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02 /071 W
-----260753Z 047857 /15

R 251515Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1946
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSULATE MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, CSCE, CZ
SUBJECT: REGIME SPONSORS "PRESS CONFERENCE" ON CHARTER 77

1. GOC HELD 90-MINUTE PRESS CONFERENCE JANUARY 24 AT PRAGUE'S INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL TO PRESENT ITS POSITION ON CHARTER 77 TO FOREIGN JOURNALISTS. WE AND SEVERAL OTHER WESTERN EMBASSIES HAD REQUESTED PERMISSION IN ADVANCE TO SEND "PRESS OFFICERS" TO CONFERENCE AS OBSERVERS, BUT RECEIVED NO REPLY FROM MFA. WHEN ACTING PAO AND BRITISH COLLEAGUE ATTEMPTED TO ENTER, THEY WERE STOPPED AT DOOR BY MFA PRESS DEPARTMENT OFFICER, WHO SAID NO FOREIGN DIPLOMATS WERE ALLOWED TO ATTEND.

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2. SOURCES CONTACTED FOLLOWING CONFERENCE, HALF-HOUR PROGRAM OF EXCERPTS FROM CONFERENCE THAT APPEARED ON PRAGUE TV, AND JANUARY 25 LOCAL PRESS ALL INDICATE THAT LITTLE WAS SAID BY SPOKESMEN BEYOND WHAT HAS ALREADY APPEARED IN LOCAL MEDIA AND BEEN REPORTED BY EMBASSY. INTERESTING FEATURE OF CONFERENCE WAS A PANEL OF 47 "REPRESENTATIVES OF PRAGUE WORKERS," TO WHOM

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM JOURNALISTS WERE READ AND WHO RESPONDED BY ROUNDLY CONDEMNING CHARTER 77 AND ITS SUPPORTERS AND ASSERTING THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS FREER THAN CAPITALISTS SOCIETIES IN THE WEST. THE THEME WAS IN KEEPING WITH REGIME'S STRATEGY OF PRESENTING IMAGE OF CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIETY UNITED AGAINST THE SMALL GROUP OF MALCONTENTS WHO SIGNED CHARTER 77.

3. ONE SOURCE TELLS US ONE OF THE PANEL MEMBERS ASSERTED THAT MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION COPIES OF CHARTER 77, WITH PARAGRAPH-BY-PARAGRAPH REBUTTALS, HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO "RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE" THROUGHOUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA. COMMENT: IF STATEMENT WAS TRUE, IT APPEARS THAT COPIES WENT TO K 1.3 MILLION COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERS PLUS NONPARTY NATIONAL FRONT ACTIVITISTS. END COMMENT.

4. AT END OF TV PROGRAM ON CONFERENCE, NARRATOR SAID: "THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED WITH THE TRUTH. WILL THEY USE IT?" A SIMILAR ATTITUDE WAS SHOWN BY THE MODERATOR OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE, MFA PRESS DEPARTMENT CHIEF MILAN KADNAR, WHO AFTER THE CONFERENCE WAS OVER, REPORTEDLY COMPLAINED BITTERLY OF WESTERN PRESS HOSTILITY TOWARD CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IN JANUARY 25 RUDE PRAVO ACCOUNT OF CONFERENCE, THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT WAS SINGLED OUT FOR CRITICISM FOR ASKING A "SENSATIONAL "

QUESTION ABOUT POSSIBLE CONNECTION BETWEEN A CZECHOSLOVAK TV PROGRAM ATTACKING BRITISH INTELLIGENCE (PRAGUE 0225) AND THE FORTHCOMING TRIAL OF OTTO ORNEST (PRAGUE 0175) AND THREE OTHERS FOR ANTI-STATE ACTIVITY; KADNAR REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT COMMENT SINCE THE CASE WAS STILL IN THE INVESTIGATIVE STAGE.

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5. COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW, THE CZECHOSLOVAK REGIME USED THIS CONFERENCE TO: 1) ATTEMPT TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE THAT IT IS HANDLING CHARTER 77 ISSUE IN AN OPEN MANNER: 2) PLACE ITS OWN CASE ON THE RECORD ONCE AGAIN, AND 3) ATTEMPT TO STRENGTHEN ITS DESIRED IMAGE OF A UNITED SOCIETY OUTRAGED BY THE CHARTER 77 STRUGGLE. BYRNE

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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